

DIME NOVEL ROUND-UP

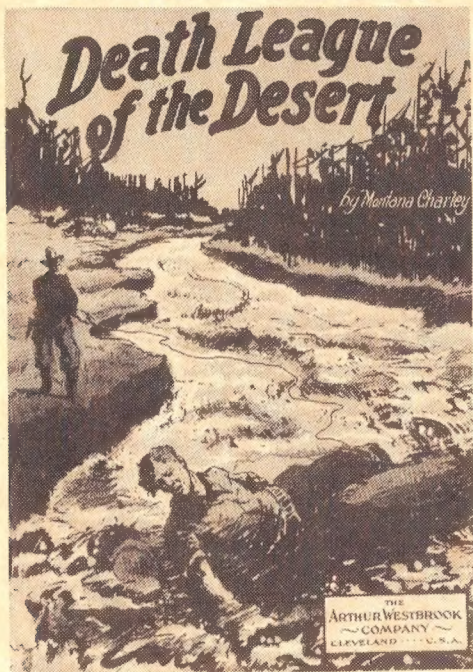
A magazine devoted to the collecting, preservation and study of old-time dime and nickel novels, popular story papers, series books, and pulp magazines

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DIME NOVEL SKETCHES



No. 273: EARLY WESTERN LIFE SERIES

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THE HITCHING POST

Anniversary. Let's dispense with the editorial "we". 40 years ago I discovered dime novels. 30 years ago I discovered *Dime Novel Round-Up*. Eddie LeBlanc thought I was the youngest dime novel collector he knew.

One year ago I became editor of this magazine. I had barely enough material for that issue and wondered where to find more. Today the file drawer is full and there is enough work in progress to sustain the publication without having to resort to writing it myself. Of course, if no one else writes something I want to see, then I will do it. A large private collection of dime novels, series books and pulp magazines, as well as access to the Hess Collection in Minneapolis, gives me resources few others possess.

I intend to continue the mix of solid scholarship and collecting comments that has marked the best of the past issues. Time is a concern. Each issue is typed, formatted, and pasted up by myself in my spare time. I could save some work by publishing only four issues a year, and increasing the number of pages, but the present rapport with the readers would be lost.

And for those who came in late, yes, that *is* Nick Carter at the top of the page.

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GUSTAVE AIMARD'S NOVELS CONCERNING THE TEXAS WAR FOR INDEPENDENCE FROM MEXICO

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Part One: The Author and His Trilogy

Oliver Gloux, who was born in Paris, France, in 1818, spent several years of his early adulthood in the Southwestern United States, in Mexico, and in various parts of South America. He knew the Comanches, the Apaches, and several other tribes well. After returning to France, he used the name *Gustave Aimard* for his dozens of stories of farfetched adventure based on his early life. These were very popular in France and the translations were widely read in other countries. When he was middle aged his mind faded and he spent his last years in a Paris mental asylum, where he repeatedly believed that Indians were chasing him. He died there in 1883.

In *The House of Beadle and Adams*, Albert Johannsen qualifies his statement about Aimard's life by saying: "According to his own story, which is far from reliable . . ." (vol II, p. 121) Gloux claimed to have worked on a slave ship which traveled from Brazil to Africa at the age of eighteen, to have commanded a Mexican ship during the Mexican-American War, and to have been captured, scalped, and left for dead by Apaches.

In spite of the limited reliable information about his life, we do know that he was a very prolific writer, that his stories are filled with adventure, and that they are partially autobiographical.

The preface to the English edition of *Loyal Heart; or, The Trapper* emphasizes that the works Aimard was then writing were not *romances* but were accounts of "his life that he was relating, his disappointed hopes, his adventurous courses." (*Loyal Heart*, trans. by William Robson, London: G. Routledge & Co., 1858, p. vii.)

Both French and American writers compared Aimard to James Fennimore Cooper, usually agreeing that Aimard was superior in his treatment of Indians. Since Aimard had lived among numerous tribes, he had first-hand knowledge of

their characteristics, their rituals, and their beliefs. Like Cooper, Aimard was criticized for the improbability of his stories and for his inability to give his characters a sense of realism. Readers who wanted adventure loved his writings.

Some of his stories were reprinted by various dime novel publishers. Beadle and Adams reprinted nine of his stories in various series in the 1880s. This article deals with the three having a subtitle mentioning the war for independence from Mexico. Written in French in the later 1850s, they were soon translated into English by Sir Frederick Les Lascelles, who also made the authorized English translation of Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables*. The English versions were published in England and in the United States in book form, and in August and September 1881 they were included in Beadle's *Dime Library*.

The first novel is *The Border Rifles, A Tale of the Texas War* (*Dime Library*, no. 149), which relates the approaching "insurrection" of Texas against Mexico; the second is entitled *The Freebooters, A Story of the Texas War* (*DL*, no. 151) and traces events until the insurrection becomes a full-fledged revolution; the last is *The White Scalper, A Story of the Texas War* (*DL*, no. 153) which carries the narrative to the completion of the war.

These are three separate works which were published separately in French and English and as individual stories in various dime novel series including Beadle's *Dime Library*. Each is about 70,000 words. Taken in sequence, however, they make up one long story. Suspense created in one story is often not resolved until a later novel. Unless one reads all three in sequence, he or she will be confused and/or unsatisfied.

In both the expository material and the narration the author reveals his views on such topics as nationalities, military personnel, and government leaders. Though the saga takes place in Texas at the time of the war for independence and is interspersed with accounts of Indian behavior and activity, the story is primarily an account of one set of improbable characters and their relationships to each other. Unfortunately, the author is not very successful in preventing either the characters or the reader from recognizing the blood kinship between the characters. What suspense was intended is lost.

The Border Rifles begins somewhere west of the Mississippi in 1812. Tranquil ("surnamed the Panther-killer"), a solitary French-Canadian woodsman of about 24, encounters a slave dealer trailing an escaped slave. Tranquil purchases the slave with furs and immediately frees him. Soon afterward, James Watt, an army captain with a young wife and two small children, chooses to retire at an attractive spot vaguely located on the Upper Missouri River, and he purchases the land from an Indian posing as a Pawnee chief. Since this Indian has been

among white communities, he is a scoundrel eager to cheat both races. Captain Watt knows that this Indian has no authority to sell the land; he wants the land himself and supposes the U. S. government will defend him. Thus, he and some settlers build a stockade and set up a community.

Tranquil, sympathetic with the Pawnees but eager to prevent bloodshed, accompanies two Pawnee friends to the stockade and warns the captain that unless he returns the land to the tribe, an attack is imminent. After Watt refuses, "[f]ive hundred Indian warriors, painted and armed for war" (*DL*, no. 149, p. 9, col. 3) set fire to the stockade and attack the settlers. During the "butchery and carnage" the former slave tries to rescue the captain's wife, who refuses to leave the place of siege. She is seen finally as she "lay motionless on the ground in a pool of blood." The chapter ends with the words: "The captain's children had disappeared." (*DL*, no. 149, p. 10, col 3)

The next chapter begins with a sentence saying that the privilege of a novelist entitles the author to shift the scene to Texas about sixteen years later.

With no explanation of where the characters have spent the intervening years, we learn that Tranquil is somewhere in South Texas where he owns an isolated tavern and inn. With him are the ex-slave and Carmela, a teenage girl assumed to be his daughter. The two Pawnee friends are in the region also, and each has been adopted by the Comanche tribe.

The next few years are glossed over and we soon arrive at the mid-1830s when Texans are eager for independence. We realize that those characters from the 1812 incidents are going to be in the midst of the action. Among the numerous other characters we meet off and on in the three novels are a Mexican army captain named Don Juan Melendez, a secretive young man known as the Jaguar, and the elderly White Scalper. Not until near the end of the trilogy does the reader get any inkling that the White Scalper is really Captain Watt and that Carmela and the Jaguar are his children. Incredible as it may seem, none of these three characters seem to know how they are related.

There are battles between the Texans and the Mexicans and between various groups of Indians, but the accounts with which we are most concerned deal with this set of characters and their attempts to save Carmela from whichever enemy has captured her or is about to capture her at any given moment.

About midway through the first novel there is a major scene at Tranquil's inn. Just as Captain Melendez is leaving, the Jaguar arrives. It is obvious that Jaguar loves Carmela, but she is always uneasy in his presence. Neither the reader nor Carmela knows that she is really the Jaguar's sister and the reader never finds out whether or not the Jaguar knows this fact. For the reader's benefit, Carmela

tells the Jaguar that his mysterious and secretive ways cause other Americans in the locale to view him with suspicion, but that she is certain he is an honorable man.

Later we learn that the Jaguar is the secret leader of a small band of Texas ruffians known as the Border Rifles. Since this band is engaging in conflicts against Mexico, the Jaguar's deeds are admired, but the Texan demand for independence is not extensive enough yet for him to receive universal approval.

Carmela begs the Jaguar to protect Melendez if the two should meet, and the Jaguar agrees to do as she requests. "Carmela," he says to her, "I will protect your lover." (*DL*, no. 149, p. 12, col. 2) Apparently the Jaguar comes to see her often; she apparently does not know why and she also does not understand why she thinks he is honorable. The reader assumes that both Melendez and the Jaguar love Carmela and will seek her as a wife.

After a few chapters about Indians and some bits of Texas history, the author describes Melendez as being very handsome, honorable, and skillful. Because of his efficiency as an officer, Melendez has been assigned to escort great quantities of gold from the interior of Texas to Mexico. A messenger (who is really a traitor) brings a letter supposedly from a general ordering a shift in route. Meanwhile, Apaches raid Tranquil's inn; while they are inside drinking, the ex-slave rescues Carmela and blows up the inn, killing dozens of drunken Indians. Then a group of Border Rifles led by the Jaguar encounters Captain Melendez and his men at the top of a steep cliff. The Jaguar demands that Melendez surrender, but he refuses. In the close combat nearly every Mexican soldier and nearly every Texan is killed. All the gold is thrown off the cliff (and is promptly forgotten and never retrieved) and Captain Melendez and the Jaguar wrestle on the precipice. With bodies entwined, the two fall into the abyss. *The Border Rifles* ends by explaining that the next story will tell what happens to them.

In *The Freebooters* the surviving Texans manage to get down the precipice to find the two bodies. To the amazement of everyone (except the reader who suspects that both men must continue to live for there to be more story), the presumably fatal fall had been interrupted by a tree, and both men are unharmed. The Texans are eager to kill Captain Melendez, but the Jaguar insists that he get his personal revenge on this man as his personal foe. Thus, for the first of many times, the Jaguar saves the life of Captain Melendez, the leader of the opposing forces as well as his sister's lover.

In the pages that follow we find one improbable incident after another about the Texan war, Indian encounters, and the entangled lives of our characters.

News of the Jaguar's success in the encounter with Captain Melendez circulates rapidly and this causes other men to join the Jaguar's band. As a result, he soon has 1,100 men, "more than ever before under one man in Texas." (*DL*, no. 151, p. 12, col. 1)

The love that Captain Melendez and the Jaguar have for Carmela is carefully woven into the events of the Texas war. From the moment the two fall off the cliff in *The Border Rifles*, they are devoted friends, although each is supposedly fighting bitterly for his own side. The Jaguar says to Melendez:

" . . . in loving Carmela you take advantage of your good right, just as I do; let this love, instead of separating, form a stronger link between us . . . let us each love her, and carry on an open warfare, without treachery or trickery . . . She alone must be judge between us." (*DL*, no. 151, p. 5, col. 1)

Such comments misleadingly suggest that the two are rivals in love. Both men are honorable military leaders, but their mutual love for Carmela influences their leadership. Each has several chances to kill the other in honorable combat and doing so would certainly add to the morale of his forces and would leave the opposing side without a leader. Instead, they often meet privately—each pretending to his troops that he is trying to negotiate a surrender—to exchange news about Carmela's current fate or to worry about what Apaches might be doing to her. These meetings continue in the last two novels.

In fact, each man actually **creates** skirmishes, not for the benefit of his own side, but to bring the two men together to confer about Carmela. The reader is supposed to admire each as an efficient and honorable leader, but neither seems fazed by the loss of men, even his own men, in these encounters. As friends, they also discuss personal matters, such as Melendez's desire to return to private life. This information gives the reader a clue that Melendez will someday return to civilian life as Carmela's husband.

Another major character in the saga is the White Scalper. For ten years he has wandered in the desert alone. He seems strange, he seldom speaks, he has a white beard, and he always appears very old, but strong. Reports say that he had declared personal war on all Indians. He attacks all Indians he meets, no matter how large the group. His skill and cruelty are incredible. Whenever he scalps one he also cuts out the heart and leaves a wide incision in the shape of a cross. He kills Indian women and children and sometimes whites as well. Everyone fears him, but few have seen him. Everyone is sure Carmela could suffer no worse fate than to fall into his hands.

Several times, at the most unexpected moment, he appears from nowhere,

grabs Carmela, and flees with her. Once, for example, during a battle at a hacienda-turned-fortress, the Scalper (who had once been the manager of the hacienda) enters, captures Carmela, and escapes with her through a secret doorway. Other characters and the reader assume that torture and mutilation await her. Repeatedly he captures her, and each time everyone—the reader, Tranquil, Jaguar, Melendez, the former slave, the former slave dealer, etc.—is terrified, but eventually (several chapters later) someone manages to rescue her from the Scalper, fortunately and surprisingly, unharmed. Of course, Carmela herself is always terrified by the Scalper—but he never harms her. In fact, he is almost subdued by her presence.

In the later part of the story Tranquil asks the Scalper why he would terrify Tranquil's daughter so, and the Scalper replies that "Dona Carmela is no more your daughter than she is mine." This is the first significant clue that the Scalper is really her father. The reader, but not the other characters, then realizes that the Scalper has never harmed her. Later the Scalper tells her that he once had a lovely wife who was massacred by Indians and that Carmela so closely resembles his wife that he always wants her near him.

Near the end of the third novel, the Jaguar captures a fleeing Mexican soldier who happens to be Santa Anna, the war ends, and Texas independence is secure. At that time the White Scalper hurries into a crowd of drunken American pirates who are holding Carmela hostage; he kills six of them and flees with Carmela. Instantly the Jaguar and some friends arrive. Eager to rescue Carmela from the White Scalper, the Jaguar kills the Scalper.

Tranquil, standing nearby, comments that "the unhappy man has killed his father" (*DL* no. 153, p. 28, col. 3) and then informs Carmela and the reader that the Scalper is really her father and the Captain Watt of the early part of *The Border Rifles*. The Scalper's dying words are to Carmela. "Bless you . . . I had a son too." (*DL* no. 153, p. 28, col. 3) Carmela is grieving for her dying father when Melendez, who is now **Colonel** Melendez, arrives.

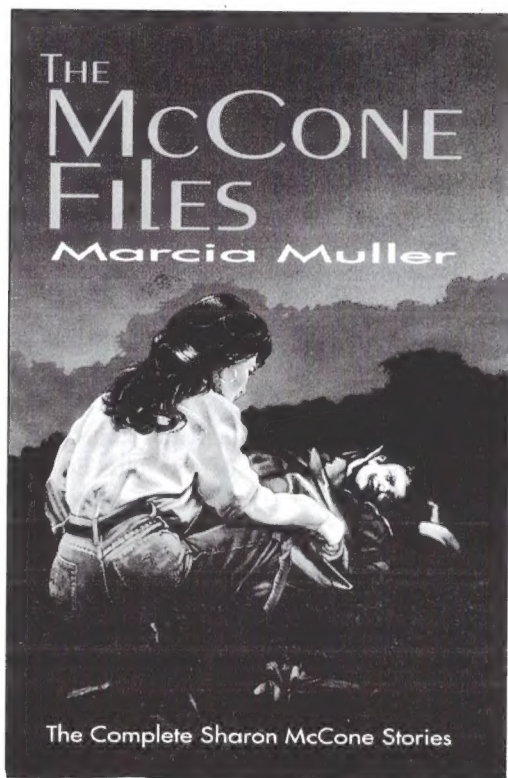
The action ends, but the concluding paragraphs tell of later events. Carmela has married Melendez, who has retired from the service; Tranquil lives with them, and the Jaguar has been killed by Apaches, those "pitiless enemies of the white race." The author then asks the reader whether the Jaguar knew he had killed his own father.

Thus ends the saga of more than 200,000 words covering 24 years.

To Be Continued in Our Next Issue

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JAMES OTIS KALER'S SILVER FOX FARM SERIES: Aviation Reaches the New England Coast

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[Synopsis: Part One discussed James Otis Kaler's career and the first volume in the series]

Part Two: The Rest of the Series

One expects that the subsequent volumes in the series will follow the pattern of the first: show the boys discussing the latest development in the growth of the silver fox farm; depict the nefarious John Ed about to set foot on the island; develop the technical background for the next technological invention, which, when completed, can help the boys defeat John Ed. But this pattern never develops. Instead, what we have in the final three volumes is one long, continuous story in which the boys (Ned joins Paul and Zenas on the island) assist in the construction of the airplane and its maiden flight (*The Aeroplane at Silver Fox Farm*), assist in the construction of the airship (*Building an Airship at Silver Fox Farm*), and then participate in its flights (*Airship Cruising from Silver Fox Farm*). But instead of the passage of time between these episodes, events run concurrently over the course of one summer season, following the winter after the events described in the first book (*The Wireless Station at Silver Fox Farm*).

The second book in the series (*Aeroplane*), begins in the standard form and recounts the events of the first volume in the first chapter "for the benefit of those who may not have read that book" (page 6). The beginning of the story includes a lengthy account of the first aircraft built by the Wright brothers and an announcement by Mr. Sawtelle that he plans to build a modified version of that aircraft. Before construction can begin, however, evidence that John Ed Bingham has returned to the island is given when the Downs family house is set on fire and there is an attempt to scuttle the Sawtelle yacht. But before John Ed can be pursued, a man appears on the island with a request to rescue his wife and sick baby who are aboard a tramp steamer that failed to dock at Halifax on a voyage from Quebec City to New Orleans.

According to the man, Mr. Henry Barton, his baby will die unless his wife

and child can be rescued from the ship. Mr. Sawtelle agrees to assist in the rescue operation and authorizes Zenas, Paul, and Ned to set out in his now-repaired yacht *Nera* to attempt to intercept the ship. Thanks to their wireless station, the boys are able to obtain information that indicates the ship is likely to be heading south some 200–300 miles east of the island. Once again, Zenas sets out to find a ship in the middle of the ocean, relying essentially on dead reckoning. Steering a course south of east, Zenas and his companions encounter the tramp steamer exactly on the mark, at a distance of over two hundred miles from the island, and effect a transfer of the wife and baby from the steamer to the yacht by means of a rope and tackle rig. They then return to Barren Island, heading directly to it as exactly as they had the ship, hitting their target exactly after sailing over a day each way.

The narrative is at its most animated when these search and rescue events are being described; it is clear that Otis is excited to write this kind of narrative. Zenas Cushing makes this observation in his own special way: "When I pick up a ship at sea without any information that could be depended upon to go an' come on, I shall howl mighty loud that what we've done goes way ahead of wireless telegraphy or airships" (*Aeroplane* 200). Shortly after their return to the island, the boys find that the nearly completed airplane has been smashed and torn. It is not difficult to tell who is responsible for this destruction; the main figures in the book blame John Ed Bingham, of course, but it almost seems as if Otis is sabotaging his own narrative. At a point more than halfway through the book the airplane has been rendered useless in such a way that extended repair is necessary. It almost appears that Otis didn't want his airplane to fly.

Thanks to Zenas's determined efforts, the boys learn that John Ed has been hiding in a partially submerged cave where he has been making forays onto the island at will. However, he is able to escape before they can capture him. With John Ed flushed out, the attention turns to completing the airplane; finally, on page 322 of a 360 page book, it makes its first flight. It circles the island successfully with Mr. Sawtelle at the controls. Then Sawtelle determines to fly to the mainland with Ned as a passenger to work the wireless set they have on board. But just as they pass over the harbor at Seaview, they see John Ed beneath them in his dory holding a rifle. They lose control of the airplane when one of John Ed's shots disables the steering gear (*Aeroplane* 342). Thanks to Sawtelle's newly-developed, but fortunate, flying skills, they are able to crash-land safely on a small hill in Seaview. Both survive with little more than scrapes and bruises, but the aircraft is a total wreck.

Zenas follows the airplane in the yacht and attempts to pursue John Ed, but

Bingham is assisted by a faster boat and Zenas is unable to catch him. Mr. Sawtelle brings the remaining pieces of the airplane, which he has christened the Silver Fox, back to Barren Island, where he hopes to reconstruct it. At that point the book ends, the Silver Fox having made a total of two flights lasting less than an hour in a single day, having come to ruin at the end.

In the third book, *Building an Airship at Silver Fox Farm*, we learn that Mr. Sawtelle intends to construct an "airship, something after the Zeppelin type, although considerably smaller" (*Building an Airship* 3). Otis introduces the comments of Claude Grahame-White, an English aviation pioneer, to support the prospect of airships being built in the future. Otis also quotes extensively from the works of Alphonse Berget, so much so that he credits Berget in his prefatory pages.

Though Zenas does not doubt the capabilities of aerial craft, his Yankee skepticism is now directed toward the technical language of these new aerial inventions:

"If folks who lay out to show others the way to build an airship would use reg'lar words," Zenas said complainingly as he pushed a book of diagrams from him. "How am I supposed to know what 'spherical-conical balloonets' means, or what a cubic meter amounts to? . . . There are more'n an hundred words in these 'ere plans that are dead strangers to me, an' I couldn't remember 'em all, no matter how much breath you might spend." (*Building an Airship* 15)

Later he complains about the Continental system of measurements: "Feet an' yards have been good enough for me all these years, an' I'm allowin' I could pull through the rest of my life even if I didn't get the hang of that Frenchified way of measurin'" (*Building an Airship* 23). Zenas displays the reluctance to adapt to technological change and technical language that can be heard in modern reactions of older workers to the advent of computers.

Before the materials for the airship's construction are brought to Barren Island, a rifle shot alerts the boys to the fact that an invader is on the island, an invader who can be none other than John Ed Bingham. Although they scour the island they can find no trace of him and assume he must have gone out to sea in his dory.

Most of the first part of the book is taken up with discussions of the airship and details of construction, including constructing housing for the dozen men Mr. Sawtelle hires to build his airship for him. While the airship is under construction, the airplane is also being repaired by the boys. Then, the Hampton power boat is stolen in the night, and once again John Ed Bingham has upset

their plans. The remainder of the book is devoted to the pursuit of John Ed, as the boys, with Zenas in charge of the yacht *Nera*, cruise from Barren Island to Seaview and up the coast to Rockport and then Seal Harbor. The boys are unsuccessful in their pursuit, but another local sailor, Captain Tobi, claims to have captured John Ed.

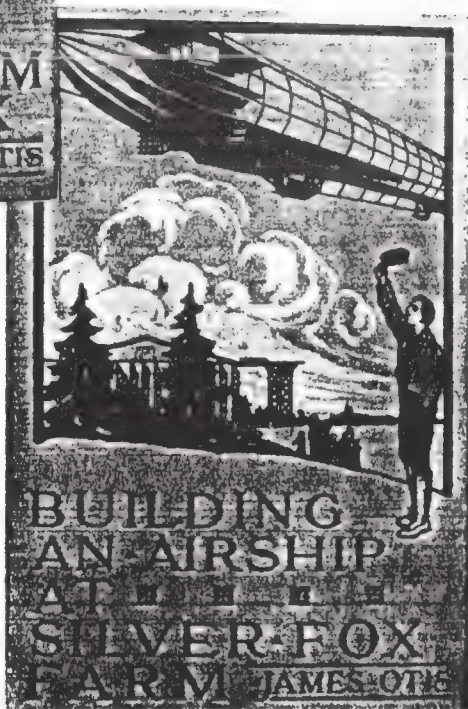
The boys have to settle for the satisfaction of recovering their Hampton power boat and they return to Barren Island in time to greet Captain Tobi, who has brought John Ed back to collect the reward offered by Mr. Sawtelle. But when Captain Tobi opens the hold of his ship he discovers that John Ed has given him the slip.

The entire second half of the book is devoted to the fruitless chase after John Ed; the boys leave the airship construction effort behind and return to it only at the end. No aerial vehicle of any kind flies during the course of the book and the only cruising that is done is that of the boys aboard the *Nera*. But the title of the book never promised that an airship would fly, only that one would be built.

The final title in the series, *Airship Cruising from Silver Fox Farm*, is true to its title, but once again Otis manages to curtail the depiction of flying activities. The book opens on a promising note as Mr. Sawtelle successfully launches the airship on a cruise from Barren Island to the town of Seaview and back. On the cruise the boys see John Ed Bingham in his dory and they exchange a few harsh words before their speed takes them beyond shouting distance. For once John Ed is content to let them pass without trying to shoot at them.

Soon a storm of near hurricane force strikes the island and misfortunes begin to occur. First both the yacht and Captain Tobi's old schooner are disabled as the winds blow them into one another and then onto the shoreline of the cove. Then another yacht is driven onto the rocks of Barren Island and the boys are unable to render assistance from the shore. The sea is so high that the members of the disabled yacht are about to perish when Mr. Sawtelle decides to launch the airship in a rescue attempt. With Zenas in the lower portion of the airship, Sawtelle maneuvers the airship in the blowing wind in such a manner as to place Zenas in a position to lift a person off of the yacht. Zenas rescues a woman and her baby and then Sawtelle is forced to return to the hangar, but the ship is torn to shreds as it reaches the ground. Sawtelle, Zenas and the two survivors safely exit before the airship is destroyed.

Mr. Downs and Captain Tobi are able to rescue one other man from the wrecked yacht before the wind and surf batter the boat to pieces. According to the narrative:



The last two titles in The Silver Fox Farm Series
Illustrations courtesy of William R. Gowen

Before night came, and when the tide was at its height, thus giving greater scope to the surf, the wreck of the schooner went to pieces, and with it the last hope of saving other lives, although it is extremely probable that those forms remaining in the bow were lifeless before the last vestige of the vessel had disappeared. (*Airship Cruising* 103)

The storm continues for some hours until "snow to the depth of several inches" covers the island (*Airship Cruising* 111). The man rescued from the schooner survives. His name is Edward Barton; the woman is his wife and the child is theirs. No one, including Otis, seems to notice that the last name is the same as that of the man whose wife and child Zenas and the boys had rescued from the tramp steamer in *Aeroplane at Silver Fox Farm*. The boys, especially Zenas, are more concerned with what has happened to John Ed Bingham, for they have seen his dory wrecked on the island during the storm.

After the storm subsides, Zenas leads a pursuit of John Ed, whom he has learned is hiding out an isolated peninsula farther up the coastline. But when the boys attempt to sneak up on him he outwits them and steals their Hampton power boat, leaving them behind. Eventually they are missed and found by Captain Tobi, whom Mr. Sawtelle and Mr. Simpson sent out in search of them. They return to Seaview where they find a new, long, speedy powered launch waiting for them in the harbor, a gift of Mr. Barton, whom they helped to rescue. With their new boat they return to Barren Island in triumph.

Another storm blows up while they are in Seaview obtaining supplies and while they are tied up at the dock they see John Ed Bingham unsuccessfully trying to make his way into the harbor in their stolen power boat. The combined force of the storm and the tide is too great and John Ed is blown to the north. Later they learn the boat has been found wrecked and John Ed is assumed to have drowned. Zenas, however, remains skeptical.

To their surprise Mr. Sawtelle is able to repair the airship, which he nicknames "Smuggler" much to Zenas's dismay, and he makes one more cruise from Barren Island to Seaview. Just as events are about to conclude John Ed makes his way up to their boat when it is tied up to Barren Island and appeals to the boys, saying his luck has run out and he is sorry for his behavior. When they speak in support of him to Mr. Simpson, he rewards John Ed for his change of heart by making him chief overseer of the foxes. The final book ends as winter approaches.

In summary, then, we can see that James Otis's Silver Fox Farm series is a strange mixture of modern technology and old-fashioned down east coastal culture. Otis's interest is much more closely focussed on coastal boating and

island life than it is on wireless telegraphy, aeroplanes, and airships. In a way, Barren Island lives up to its name, for the modern schemes are unfulfilled, more often than not, and the promise of technology is frequently barren. The details of technology are clearly of secondary importance compared to the spirit of survival and endurance shown by the main characters.

The ostensible heroes, Paul Simpson and Ned Bartlett, are passive bystanders caught up in the actions of the two most dynamic characters in the books, Zenas Cushing, full of energy and Yankee ingenuity, and John Ed Bingham, the local ne'er-do-well who possesses exceptional strength, agility, and quickness. Like the foxes which he so much wants to join, he is cunning, swift, and difficult to see. It is appropriate that John Ed is given the job of overseeing the foxes, whom he so much resembles. Of course, there is a third, dynamic force in the book, the Maine coastal environment, with its rocky base, beautiful scenery, and unpredictable weather.

It is clear that modern technology stands little chance in this harsh environment. Like the modern boats that are wrecked by the unforgiving, rocky shoals, the flying machines of Mr. Sawtelle are vulnerable and impermanent. So in one effort James Otis indulges the reading public in the latest fad, yet all the while pays more attention to the verities of New England life, where endurance in the face of a harsh coastal environment is the single most important truth. Somehow it seems fitting that James Otis Kaler wrote this series among his last works. After a full career as a writer, father, and educator, he set his sights north of Portland, describing human attempts to endure as the storms of winter broke over him as well as over his series book characters.

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A version of this article was presented at the Popular Culture Association, Chicago, April 9, 1994.

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POPULAR CULTURE IN THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS: A Report on a Symposium

J. Randolph Cox
St. Olaf College

The dates were June 9-10, the place the Mumford Room, the Madison Building, the Library of Congress, Washington, DC. Over 140 registrants and more than 20 presenters gathered for the symposium on dime novels, series books, and paperbacks sponsored by the Rare Book and Special Collections Division and the Center for the Book. The audience was attentive and enthusiastic and the city extended a warm welcome (weatherwise) while our hosts made us feel equally welcome as many of us used some of our spare time to conduct research.

The presentations which represented a high quality of scholarship were divided into eight sessions over the two days, and the contents can only be suggested by the titles of the papers. After opening remarks by John Y. Cole, from the Center for the Book, and Larry Sullivan, from the Rare Book and Special Collections Division, business began in earnest with the first session.

Session 1: Dime Novel History. Moderator: Colleen Tremonte, Michigan State University. "A Thumbnail History of Dime Novels", Edward T. LeBlanc; "Dime Novel Counterfeiting: The Lizzie Borden Case", Kathleen Chamberlain; "Parallel Pugilists: A Study of John L., Jr., and Gentleman Jack Dime Novels in Street and Smith's *New York Five Cent Library*," Deidre A. Johnson.

Session 2: War and Technology in Popular Fiction. Moderator: Andrew Kantar, Ferris State University. "The Possibilities of Flight: Shaping Reader Response in American Aviation Series Books, 1909-1959", David K. Vaughan; "Advocating War Preparedness: H. Irving Hancock's *Conquest of the United States Series*", Elizabeth Frank; "From Dave Dawson to Mac Wingate and Beyond: The Glamorization of World War II in Juvenile Series and Modern Paperbacks", M. Paul Holsinger.

Session 3: Plenary Session. Moderator: Larry Sullivan. "The Discovery of Louisa May Alcott's Pseudonym", Leona Rostenberg; "Dime Novels by the 'Children's Friend' (Louisa May Alcott)", Madeleine B. Stern.

Session 4: Popular Culture Collections. Moderator: Sybille Jagusch, Library of Congress. "Popular Culture Collections at the Library of Congress", Clark Evans; "They Came from the Newsstand: Pulp Magazines and Vintage

Paperbacks in the Popular Culture Library", Alison Scott; "Popular Culture Collections in Research Libraries: The Current State of Preservation and Access", Martha Hansen and Mark Weimer.

Session 5: Publishing Practices. Moderator: James Keeline. "The Librarian of Congress and the American Library Association in the Battle Over Cheap Novels in the Mail", Lydia C. Schurman; "The Anglo-American Pulp Wars", E. M. Sanchez-Saavedra; "New Numbers and Evolving Editions: Keeping Up With Series Books", Karen Nelson Hoyle.

Session 6: Plenary Session. Moderator: Larry Sullivan. "Clearing a Space for Middlebrow Culture: The Struggle Over the Book, 1880-1920", Janice A. Radway.

Session 7: Reader Reception and Response to Popular Fiction. Moderator: Rosemary Plakas, Library of Congress. "'A Sort of Literary Heresy': The Production and Reception of Mrs. Alex McVeigh Miller's 'The Bride of the Tomb'", Angela Farkas; "From Immorality to Immortality: Character Transplant from Victorian Romances to the Oz Series", Alan Pickrell; "Unearthing the Historical Reader; or, Reading Girls' Reading", Nancy Tillman Romalov.

Session 8: Transitions Across Genres. Moderator: Joseph T. Slavin, III. "Authors Who Wrote Dime Novels and Series Books", John T. Dizer; "From Laura Jean Libbey to Harlequin Romances", Jean Carwile Masteller; "Paperback Detective: The Evolution of the Nick Carter Series from Dime Novel to Modern Paperback, 1886-1990", J. Randolph Cox.

Further identification of the speakers will be found in the earlier announcement of the symposium in the April issue of **Dime Novel Round-Up**. While there were many high points during the two days, we will never forget Friday's plenary session. The presentation by Leona Rostenberg and Madeleine Stern, whose contributions to our field cannot be overstated, was absolutely electrifying!

We cannot expect an annual reoccurrence of the symposium in Washington, DC, but we certainly hope there will be a return in the not too distant future.

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Recent books in review, or current and forthcoming publications noted.

ALL THE ALCOTT THRILLERS COLLECTED AT LAST!

Louisa May Alcott. *Louisa May Alcott Unmasked: Collected Thrillers*. Edited, and with an introduction by Madeleine Stern. Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1995. ISBN 1-55553-225-x, \$55.00, ISBN 1-55553-226-8 pap, \$24.95

Sometimes wishes are granted! In a recent issue of this journal we expressed the desire to see all of the anonymous and pseudonymous sensation stories which Louisa May Alcott wrote for the popular magazines and story papers collected between one set of covers. Here is the book.

The stories speak for themselves as examples of why we can never read Alcott in quite the way we might have done once. Here is tangible evidence of what Stern calls Alcott's "double literary life," almost as though she were writing her juvenile fiction with one hand and her thrillers with the other. Stern's introduction does more than summarize the material found in the introductions to the previous volumes (*Behind A Mask*, *Plots and Counterplots*, *A Double Life*, *Freaks of Genius*, and *From Jo March's Attic*); it discusses the effect that the discovery of the double life has had on Alcott criticism. (This does not preclude your seeking out the earlier collections.)

There are 754 pages in this collection: 29 stories and a bibliography by Daniel Shealy of all located Alcott thrillers. The five stories not included ("Marion Earle; or, Only an Actress!", "Enigmas," "Hope's Debut," "Thrice Tempted," and "A Modern Mephistopheles, or, The Long Fatal Love Chase") are not lost to us, however. The third and fourth titles may be found in *Louisa May Alcott: Selected Fiction* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1991) while the full text of the last novel is scheduled for publication later this year. Meanwhile, this is a perfect bedside companion. jrc

FROM THE CREATOR OF THE LONE RANGER

Fran Striker. *One More River*. Runnemede, NJ: Quest Word, 1993; 353 p. ISBN 1-884556-01-9, paper, \$16

Among the lesser known incidents of American history has been the experiment with the use of camels for transport in the southwestern United States. From time to time it surfaces in western fiction or on the screen. It was once the basis for a 3 part series, "Camel Brigade," on *The Lone Ranger* radio

series in 1945, and was later used in the Lone Ranger newspaper strip and *The Lone Ranger and the Silver Bullet* (Grosset & Dunlap, 1948). Since those were by Fran Striker, it is not surprising that the writer of so many of the Lone Ranger's adventures should have chosen this episode for a full length mainstream adventure novel. Unfinished at the time of his death in 1962, the novel has now been completed by his son, Fran Striker, Jr. Bob Trent, Lieutenant, Second Dragoons, U. S. Army, is a man who wants to quit doing what he's been expected to do most of his life and become the master of his own destiny. This is the main reason he signs on as an observer for the camel expedition. The theme may seem familiar, but it appears fresh in the hand of a master story teller. The game of strategy between the Comanche Quannah and Trent, worked out in the sand, is particularly well done. jrc

DIME NOVELS SURVEYED

Marcus Klein. *Easterns, Westerns, and Private Eyes: American Matters, 1870-1900*. Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1994. 216 pp. ISBN 0-299-14300-7, \$40.00, ISBN 0-299-14304-X pap. \$17.95

This collection of 10 essays on American themes is the first scholarly book to deal with dime novels since Michael Denning's *Mechanic Accents* (1987). The most obvious unity is their parade of American characteristics. Horatio Alger, Jr., the juvenile underworld of 19th-century New York City, Buffalo Bill Cody, Theodore Roosevelt, Deadwood Dick, Owen Wister, detective Allan Pinkerton, the Molly Maguires, and Dashiell Hammett—there is something for everyone here. There is much valuable information, but it is so tightly packed that it is often difficult to follow Klein's analogies and metaphors to comprehend and accept his conclusions. His uses such complex sentences that he often ends by denying the assertion made in the opening clause. His assumptions are not always accompanied by adequate supporting evidence—just how did Alger undermine children's literature?

In "The Lessons of Deadwood Dick" Klein observes that easterners wrote dime novel westerns from an easterner's perspective on the frontier. He discusses in quick succession the works of Edward L. Wheeler, Jesse C. Cowdrick, Prentiss Ingraham, and Albert W. Aiken. The discussion of one of the stories in Aiken's popular series for Beadle & Adams about road agent turned miner and rancher, Dick Talbot, contains several errors. The minor ones may be overlooked ("Dick Talbot, the Ranch King; or, The Double Foe" appeared in *Beadle's Dime Library*, no. 733, not no. 133, a probable

typographic error), but Klein displays the problem a critic faces when dealing with one part of a longer series without considering its context within the rest of the series. The Talbot stories number sixteen and appeared over a period of 19 years, first in *The Saturday Journal*, then *Beadle's Weekly* (and its successor the *Banner Weekly*). The stories in the *Dime Library* are all reprints of the serials. Klein find significance in the 1892 appearance of the story in the *Dime Library* "two years after the Bureau of the Census declared the closing of the frontier." What happens when we realize the story actually had its original appearance as a serial in 1888, two years prior to the closing of the frontier?

The author's seeming disdain for his subjects makes one wonder why he bothered to consider them at all. He treats most of the writers as hacks, with the exception of Wister and Hammett (the latter is really outside the parameter of dates set in the subtitle). The book contains an extensive and valuable bibliography, but the author's arguments should be approached with caution.

jrc

PULP REPORT

Behind the Mask, No. 32, [May 1995]. Final issue. Tom and Ginger Johnson, 504 E. Morris Street, Seymour, TX 76380.

Reprints pulp stories "Captain Danger's Convoy" by Lt. Scott Morgan from *Air War*, Spring 1943; "Wings of War" by Lt. Scott Morgan from *Sky Fighters*, July 1937; "Headsmen Strafe" by Donald E. Keyhoe from *Flying Aces*, February 1938; "Mission of Death" by George Bruce from *The Lone Eagle*, May 1935; "Midnight Wings" by Franklin M. Ritchie from *Sky Riders*, [no date given].

Ed Lauterbach

RETROSPECTIVE REVIEW

George Orwell. "Boys Weeklies," in *A Collection of Essays*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1954, pp. 284-313

Orwell writes of the boys' "twopenny papers" and their place in the British social order. Ten weeklies are discussed: *Gem*, *Magnet*, *Modern Boy*, *Triumph*, and *Champion*, all published by Amalgamated Press, and *Wizard*, *Rover*, *Skipper*, *Hotspur*, *Adventure*, published by D. C. Thomson & Co. Apparently the bulk of the fiction is public school based ("the schools ... are represented as ancient and fashionable foundations of the type of Eton or Winchester"). At one

point Orwell states that as "a teacher at two of these schools myself, I found that not only did virtually all the boys read the *Gem* and *Magnet*, but that they were still taking them fairly seriously when they were fifteen or even sixteen."

Orwell discusses the popularity of these papers, their plots, and the racial/ethnic stereotypes commonly found in their pages. The Thomson papers are described as being more sensational, delving into war, adventure, science fiction, and other themes with pulp-like covers to match. "On one a cowboy is clinging by his toes to the wing of an aeroplane in mid-air and shooting down another aeroplane with his revolver."

He then discusses the "Yank Mags," the pulps which he also refers to as "threepenny Yank Mags." He compares the violence of the American pulp *Fight Stories* with boxing fiction as found in Thomson's *Wizard*.

He walked in stolidly and smashed a clublike right to my face. Blood splattered and I went back on my heels, but surged in and ripped my right under the heart. (*Fight Stories*)

He volleyed blows with a bewildering speed for so huge a fellow. In a moment Ben was simply blocking with his gloves as well as he could. (*Wizard*)

"In the Yank Mags," Orwell says, "you get real blood-lust, really gory descriptions of the all-in, jump-on-his-testicles style of fighting," and opines that "*Fight Stories* ... would have very little appeal except to sadists and masochists."

He ends the essay with a discussion of the sexual and political orientation of British papers, describing them as right-wing and chaste.

One other essay in the volume may be of interest, "Raffles and Miss Blandish," in which Orwell discusses turn-of-the-century detective stories (Hornung's Raffles fiction) in conjunction with James Hadley Chase's *No Orchids for Miss Blandish* (1939), a story which he sees as borrowing from William Faulkner's "Sanctuary." No wonder. Chase borrowed freely from other writers, including the American hard-boiled writers of the 1930s.

John Dinan

Orwell's famous essay was originally published in *Horizon* for March 1940. In the May issue the original writer of so many of the stories in the *Gem* and the *Magnet*, Charles Hamilton (writing under his most famous pseudonym, Frank Richards), replied at length to Mr. Orwell. Subsequent editions of "Boys Weeklies" include Orwell's footnotes admitting he had not realized it possible for one man to have written so much. Ed

BOOKS AND PERIODICALS RECEIVED

Burroughs Bulletin, no. 22, April 1995 [Published quarterly for members of the (Edgar Rice) Burroughs Bibliophiles] George McWhorter, Curator, The Burroughs Memorial Collection, University of Louisville, Louisville, KY 40292. \$28 per year.

ECHOES, Vol. 14, no. 4 (July 1995) and no. 5 (August 1995) Whole numbers 81 and 82 [For pulp magazine collectors; new format, too much to describe: from *Railroad Magazine* to *The Masked Rider*] Fading Shadows, Inc. 504 E. Morris Street, Seymour, TX 76380. \$4.50 per issue, 3 issues for \$13.50, 6 issues for \$26. Bi-monthly.

The Horatio Alger Society Newsboy, Vol 33, no. 3 (May-June 1995) [For collectors of Horatio Alger and other juvenile series authors; this is the convention report issue] Robert E. Kasper, 585 E. St. Andrews Drive, Media, PA 19063. \$20 per year, which includes membership in the Society.

Martha's KidLit Newsletter, Vol. 7, no. 3 (Spring 1995) [For Collectors of Out of Print Children's Books; emphasis on Hugh Lofting, list of Carnegie Medal winners] Martha Rasmussen, Box 1488, Ames, IA 50014. \$30 per year.

Story Paper Collectors' Digest, Vol 49, nos. 580 and 581 (April and May 1995) [For collectors of British boys' and girls' stories and papers; the British *Dime Novel Round Up*] Mary Cadogan, 46 Overbury Avenue, Beckenham, Kent, BR3 2PY, England. Write for subscription rates.

The Whispered Watchword, Vol. #95-5 (June-July 1995) [Newsletter of the Society of Phantom Friends; 10th anniversary issue] Kate Emburg, 4100 Cornelia Way, N. Highland, CA 95660. \$26 yearly (note increase).

Yellowback Library, Numbers 132-133 (June-July 1995) [Series Books, Dime Novels, and Related Literature; this is the place to look for those long-wanted books] Gil O'Gara, P. O. Box 36172, Des Moines, IA 50315. \$30 per year, \$15 for six months.

Kathleen Chamberlain. "The Bobbsey Twins Hit the Trail, or, Out West with Children's Series Fiction." *Children's Literature Association Quarterly* (Spring 1992): 9-15.

Sam Moskowitz. "The Rise and Fall of the First Gernsback Empire." *Argosy, Special Edition*, Volume 3, Number 1, Mid-Year 1995. [The story of the Man Who Created Modern Science Fiction] Richard Kyle Publications, 242 East Third Street, Long Beach, CA 90802. \$2.

R. D. Mullen. "From Standard Magazines to Pulp and Big Slicks: A Note on the History of U. S. General and Fiction Magazines." *Science Fiction Studies* 22, part 1 (March 1995): 144-156. [Perhaps the best, concise, illustrated survey of the early pulp fiction magazines we have seen. *Nick Carter Weekly* is still cited as the predecessor to *Street & Smith's Detective Story Magazine* when it should be *Nick Carter Stories* (the successor to the *New Nick Carter Weekly*), but apart from that this is highly recommended. \$7.50 for the issue (payable to SF-TH Inc.) from Arthur B. Evans, East College, DePauw University, Greencastle, IN 46135-0037]

William J. Scheick. "Marginal Characters and the Image of Texas in the Dime Novel." *New Mexico Humanities Review* 3 (Fall 1980): 5-19.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

A friend of mine in London, Mr. W. O. G. Lofts, suggested I should write to you. I'm a novice collector of old boys books and have built up a modest collection. I'm trying to get hold of some of the old 19th-century penny bloods and the later Penny dreadfuls from England. Trouble is, a lot of this material has been bought up by collectors outside the country including the USA. Could you recommend any magazine or collectors' digest which would be best to advertise in for this material? If you know of anybody who collects 19th-century pulp fiction from England perhaps you'd let me know.

Michael Holmes
Aughamore Far
Sligo
Ireland

We have replied to Mr. Holmes, but perhaps some of our readers might like to write him as well. Ed

NOTES & QUERIES

In Memoriam. Word has reached us of the death, May 24, of Walter Ryerson Johnson (known to nearly everyone as Johnny). He began his long career as a writer for the pulp magazines with stories about the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, then moved on to westerns, mysteries, and anything else he could sell. Along the way he ghosted three Doc Savage novels for Lester Dent. A frequent visitor to Pulpcon in recent years, he will be remembered for his friendliness and his fascinating anecdotes about the pulp era.

Information on Detective Fiction Needed. Dawn Fisk Thomsen, 9934 Ferndale Avenue, Columbia, MD 21046, is compiling a bibliography of American detective stories (fiction) published from 1840 to 1880 which either use the word "detective" to describe a character, or portray a character in the action, or role, of an amateur or professional detective, whether the word "detective" is used or not. We have been in touch with her and have suggested her bibliography should benefit all of us who have an interest in early detective fiction. She will need information from the story papers and early publishers, primarily, and not the series devoted to detective fiction (like Tousey's *New York Detective Library*) which did not begin until 1883. Please forward any information.

Uncollected Merriwell. As far as we can tell, the last survey of the Merriwell pulp magazine stories was published in 1962 in issues number 354-356 of this magazine (back issues are available for \$9 for the set of three issues for anyone who came in late). While J. Edward Leithead and Gerald J. McIntosh did a fine job, we need a new assessment. We also need to identify all of the writers. Leithead made some guesses and it was widely advertised that Gilbert Patten had come out of "retirement" to write the later ones, but with the help of Carolyn A. Davis at the Street & Smith Archive (Syracuse University) we can now identify most of the others. We can add an additional story which does not appear in Eddie LeBlanc's *Dime Novel Bibliography: The Merriwells* (still available from him at \$25, write 87 School Street, Fall River, MA 02720 for details).

John H. Whitson (author of the stories in the latter *New Tip Top Weekly*) wrote the stories in *Tip Top Semi-Monthly* (1915). The records do not tell us who wrote the first three stories, but we think it probable Whitson did. Whitson also wrote the five stories that appeared in *Wide Awake Magazine* (1916). Stories in *Sport Story Magazine* (1927-1928) were shared by three writers: Gilbert Patten, Warren E. Carleton, Joseph B. Ames, and J. Irving Crump. Carleton was responsible for the stories in *Fame and Fortune Magazine* (1928-1929) and *Fortune Story Magazine* (1929). At that point Patten resumed the series for the stories that appeared in *Top Notch Magazine* (1929-1930).

The missing story? "Frank Merriwell and the Mystery Ship" by J. Irving Crump, a serial scheduled for *Sport Story Magazine* in 1929. The story was bought as a Merriwell, but published as "The Mystery Ship" as by John Samson.

Puzzle Detective Wanted. Dana Richards, 10814 Rippon Lodge Drive, Fairfax, VA 22032, is looking for a series of stories that appeared in an unidentified magazine early in this century. His only clue is a reference from an article by Martin Gardner in *Hobbies* for September 1934,

The first and only puzzle collector I ever met was a fictitious character. He was the chief detective in a series of short stories that ran many years ago in one of the popular mystery magazines. As I recall it he employed the skill which he derived from his curious hobby, in unraveling baffling criminal problems.

Sherlock Holmes in Dime Novels. Altoon Kunst, Troelstralaan 14, 9665 BX Oude Pekela, Holland, collects Sherlock Holmes and is interested in finding examples in dime novel format. We've told him about the appearances of Conan Doyle's stories in *American Detective Series*, *Magnet Detective Library*, *Sherlock Holmes Detective Library*, and other publications. Can any of our readers help him find copies for his collection?

Young Wild West in the Movies (part two).

Young Wild West on the Border (released July 5, 1912)

Synopsis: Young Wild West and his party approach the Mexican border, and believing themselves to be miles away from any town, they stop at a deserted house and there celebrate the Fourth of July. Pedro, the owner of the property, is informed that strangers have taken possession of the premises and immediately goes to dislodge them. Wild West pays the Mexican and orders him away.

Leaving the Chinese cook in charge of the house, Wild West and his followers go to town. Entering a dance hall, they notice a display of flags; the Stars and Strips beneath the Mexican banner. Wild quickly changes the position of the flags and a big rumpus follows. The Mexicans are defeated. Pedro and his men swear to be revenged, and, accordingly swoop down on the deserted house to rob the Americans of all their belongings. Wild West arrives in time to save the Chinaman from the hands of the marauders, while Pedro manages to slip away. Still bent on revenge, Pedro abducts Young Wild West's sweetheart, Arietta, who after many thrilling incidents, is restored to her friends, while Pedro and his gang are railroaded to prison. (*Moving Picture World*)

Review: No review traced, merely announced for release.

Victor Berch

Dime Novel Round-Up

Guidelines for Contributors

We welcome articles on any aspect of the areas of dime novels (1860-1915), story papers (1839-1924), juvenile series books (1850-1950), and pulp magazines (1896-1950). Scholarly articles, reports of significant research, notes, and book reviews are wanted. Manuscripts normally should not exceed 10 typed pages in length although longer ones will be considered. Notes and reviews should be no more than 500 words, feature articles 2,500 words.

All pages must be typewritten or computer printed, double-spaced. Computer users should include a copy on diskette, preferably in WordPerfect 5.1 or ASCII format. Illustrations that accompany a manuscript should be black and white photographs or sharp xeroxes in color or black and white.

Bibliography and notes should be in accordance with the *Chicago Manual of Style* (14th edition) or *The MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers* (3rd edition). These reference works are available in most public, college, or university libraries.

Please send your manuscripts to the office of the editor. Since manuscripts are submitted to one or more outside reviewers, please allow approximately three months for a decision.

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